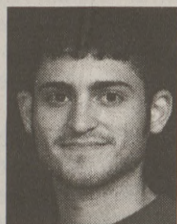


Tainted blood

Dishonest blood donor deserves strict punishment



CHRIS LIVELY

Every year at The University of Missouri-Columbia, the Greek community participates in the "Greek Week" blood drive sponsored by the American Red Cross where fraternities and sororities compete with each other to earn points for recognition. The blood drive has been rather successful as it actually set a record in 1999, taking in 3,156 units of blood in a single day, single site blood drive, earning it recognition in the Guinness Book of Records. However, this year, one student used participating in the blood drive contest as a chance to commit a mindless and inconsiderate act of deceit — an act of deceit she must be held accountable for.

Christie Key, a ranking member of the school's Gamma Phi Beta chapter, took competition to a whole new and what should be unfathomable level as she encouraged other sorority members to lie about their health so that her sorority could maximize its points. According to Fox News, Key wrote in an e-mail: "I don't care if you got a tattoo last week LIE. I don't care if you have a cold. Suck it up. We all do. LIE. Recent piercings? LIE." The e-mail also read, "We're not messing around. Punishment for not giving blood is going to be quite severe."

Key's action was obviously one deserving nothing short of shame and discontent, as she does face punishment from the university's disciplinary

board that may result in expulsion. Then again, she may only get a letter of reprimand. However, her actions were significant enough to merit the sufficient punishment required to make any student aware that this sort of behavior will not be tolerated. In this case, a warning is simply inadequate. Be it from the university or the Red Cross, Key should face legal action for her deeds.

The American Red Cross requires blood donors to disclose certain information regarding their personal health to assure their safety as well as that of potential recipients. In addition, the blood units are tested several times for multiple pathogens or antibodies to those pathogens. The tests that are used are of utmost quality as they include an investigational test that may reduce the window period, which is the time between when a virus infects the blood and the body forms antibodies that can be detected. The entire handling process is one of high-tech screening requiring proper processing, labeling and storage, according to the Red Cross. As the Red Cross ensures the safety of its blood supply, it is nevertheless essential that these high-tech procedures be used in sync with honest feedback from donors to prevent any blood supply contamination. Key did not supply this honest feedback.

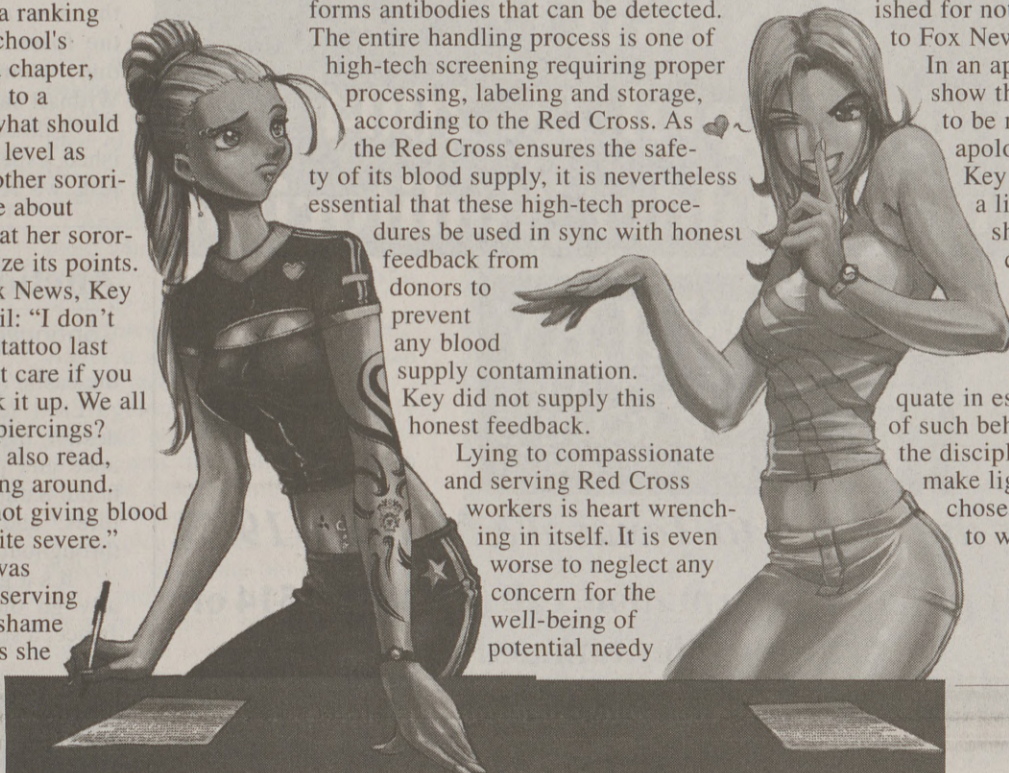
Lying to compassionate and serving Red Cross workers is heart wrenching in itself. It is even worse to neglect any concern for the well-being of potential needy

blood recipients. Surely a college sophomore is conscious of the reasons people are asked to disclose health information before donating blood. Key knowingly accepted the risks of her encouragement, and all for the insignificant aspiration of a little recognition.

Cathy Scroggs, university vice chancellor for student affairs, mentioned that the university's code of student conduct prohibits any action "which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person." Key acted in direct violation of the standard, and appropriate disciplinary action must follow to ensure that the seriousness of such behavior is understood.

A national statement released by Gamma Beta Phi said the e-mail was sent "without the consent or approval of any chapter officer." It also mentioned that the rules for the blood drive state that members and chapters may not be punished for not donating, according to Fox News.

In an apparent attempt to show that she intended there to be no bad blood, Key apologized. Yes, expelling Key from the university is a little harsh, as she should not be denied the chance to further her academic career. But on the other hand, a letter of reprimand would prove inadequate in establishing the severity of such behavior. Nevertheless, the disciplinary board cannot make light of someone who chose to risk people's health to win a contest.



Chris Lively is a senior sociology major. Graphic by Ivan Flores

EDITORIAL IMPARTIAL PROCESS

Election Commission, SGA Judicial Court function appropriately

In every student body election, all the candidates agree to follow rules meant to settle disputes and govern how they campaign. The rules keep a level playing field for candidates and ensure the final contest is a fair one.

This year's campaign was no different, although the provisions of those regulations became the center of a controversy during the run-off between Jack Hildebrand and Will McAdams. McAdams' supporters filed a complaint with SGA Judicial Court against the Election Commission over the manner in which Hildebrand was able to expense some items used in his campaign. They alleged that this gave Hildebrand an unfair advantage. The court, however, upheld Hildebrand's appointment to student body president, and rightfully so.

The validity of the complaints about the content of the Election Code is a separate matter for consideration later. What is important, though, is that Hildebrand proactively sought answers to his questions regarding election policy from the Election Commission. It was the other candidates' responsibility to do the same if they encountered any gray areas regarding campaign finance.

Equally important is the fact that the system as a whole ended up with a result that was fair to all parties, executed well and represented the will of a majority of the student body.

The process that was laid out for disputed claims was followed, and it presented a result that all parties should agree was fair. Those in the running may not have each agreed with the ruling, but the integrity of the ruling isn't in question. The will of the student body was not contravened, yet the legitimate complaints of others were still heard. The system, in this case, functioned as it should.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

PUF and AUF will increase, research facility beneficial

In response to an April 22 mail call:

I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Johnston for taking the time to research the Permanent University Fund (PUF) and the Available University Fund (AUF). Unfortunately, the hearsay references that Mr. Johnston never cites are quite incorrect.

The PUF has experienced recent volatility, but this is to be expected in a market economy. Over time, these fluctuations are smoothed out and, as the stock market increases, so will the PUF. The AUF has actually increased. The recent tuition increase was not connected to fluctuations in either the PUF or the AUF. The increase was a necessary result of inadequate funding by the Texas Legislature. For more information on the PUF or the AUF, students should visit the Tuition Policy Advisory Council's Web site at <http://sga.tamu.edu/tpac>.

Johnston also asserts that the new interdisciplinary life sciences research facility will not provide any revenue to students; this is absolutely false. Current faculty and students, and those attracted to the University's new research facility will be able to significantly enhance the quality of their work and generate new funding sources. These sources will directly translate into new graduate assistantships and student worker positions. The educational benefits are essentially unlimited.

Texas A&M has been in the business of education for 128 years, but never expanding upon a vision or changing to meet the needs

of society not only keeps us in the wrong century, it is a disservice to the quality of education that all students deserve when they come to this University.

Josh Peschel
graduate student

Research center funding a likely result of raised tuition

As a student who attended Dr. Gates dog-and-pony show on the justification for the whopping increases in tuition, I just have to wonder, how coincidental is it that merely weeks after the Board of Regents approve the tuition increase, we find funding to build a \$100 million research center? The message conveyed during the forum was there was no alternative to the raise, explaining that the Permanent University Fund was tapped and all other sources of income exhausted.

It is not that I have a problem with a new research center; research money only furthers our school. However, research seems to be the only focus. Of the 447 new faculty members, how many are slated for top research Ph.D.s? Research is an added bonus; the core job of this University is to educate the students of Texas. When will the administration stop lying to students and be up front? Our research-first objective has accomplished one thing: inadequate professors and a flourishing off-campus tutoring industry.

Justin Thomas
Class of 2005

Towing companies' use of 'drop fee' inconsistent

Regardless of where one goes in College Station, he will likely see a little red sign informing him and other drivers that towing is enforced in a parking lot. Often, however, drivers miss these signs, misunderstand them or disregard the parking rules, and walk outside to find their car missing or halfway hooked up to a towing truck.

Emily Chandler, a senior marketing major, and Kathryn Shepard, a sophomore history major, found themselves in this situation. What they didn't expect was to walk away from it feeling like they had been victims of extortion. Towing companies in College Station are failing to follow a city ordinance in the handling of "drop fees," and it is time they are held accountable and show consistency in administering this fee.

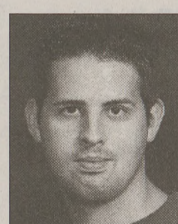
"My boyfriend and I parked near my apartment and were only going to take a couple minutes," Chandler said. "We had only been in for less than five minutes when he looked out the window to see his car hooked to a tow truck."

It's quite understandable that to control a limited amount of parking, an apartment complex would need to call upon a towing service to make sure tenants have enough spaces. Yet in this case, Chandler was a tenant and the towing service was going to tow the car she had used to get home in. Since they had caught their mistake, the towing company employee told her that he would not tow the vehicle. They would not tow it, that is, if they paid him \$40 in cash.

"Clearly he was just out to make more money on innocent people," Chandler said. "My boyfriend had to pay \$40 for five minutes in an unneeded parking spot that is for my use anyway."

Shepard had a similar experience in the same week, when a trucker threatened to tow her car in a lot next to Aggie Station. In her case, the employee had not even begun to hook her car up to his truck. "As I pleaded for my car the gentleman in the truck continued to hook up my car and told me he wouldn't give it back right away unless I immediately gave him \$20 in cash," Shepard said. "It seemed obvious to me that the trucker was going to pocket the money."

Chandler and Shepard suspect dishonesty in these kinds of deals, and with good reason. When seemingly arbitrary amounts of money are demanded in return for one's vehicle, it sounds like blackmail, and the fact that cash is demanded would make it quite easy to pocket without having proof of the incident. So were these employees merely following company procedure? They



MIKE WALTERS

were not. After contacting these companies, both report that it is their standard policy to discontinue a hook-up when the driver shows proof of ownership and pays what is called a "drop fee," for which they are given a receipt. However, neither Chandler nor Shepard received a receipt for their payment.

And what exactly determines the drop fee? Both companies said that the drop fee is a fee that towing employees must charge as mandated and set by the city of College Station. However, when asked about how much this fee was, both companies' representatives became belligerent and refused to disclose the amount.

It turns out there is no such rule regarding how much the towing company must charge. The College Station Code of Ordinances merely states that a company must not charge more than \$40 for the drop fee.

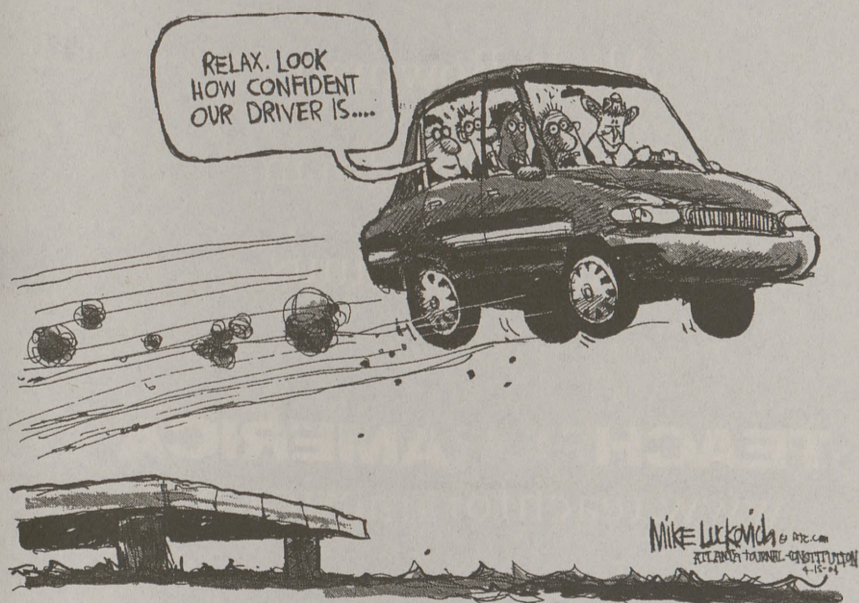
So why were these two women charged different amounts, and why require a drop fee anyway? The only plausible explanation is that this fee is to pay for the work done by the towing company. Taking in a reasonable estimate of the employee spending 10 minutes to hook up a vehicle, it amounts to paying him a wage of \$240 an hour, which is absurd.

Further, the fact that only a "maximum" amount is declared by the city, the ordinance allows for the towing employee to charge the car owner any arbitrary amount. For someone to be subjected to the whims of this employee is not only frustrating but unfair to everyone who finds themselves in this position.

Considering that these two incidents happened within a week of each other, there may be many other students who have shared these experiences and didn't realize that others are being dealt with in the same suspicious manner.

Students and citizens of College Station should demand a higher level of honesty in these situations. Towing companies should charge a set amount for their drop fees, if they must charge them at all, and there must be a way for their employees to be accountable to the companies for them, so it doesn't seem like they're trying to make some easy cash off of students already having a bad day. Though towing in town is a necessary evil to control the limited amount of parking spaces in apartment buildings and business establishments, that doesn't mean it has to be an evil business.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.



MIKE LUKOWICZ